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The China Policy That Isn't

*Beyond curbing the Soviets, Haig
and Deng have little to agree on*

FOR SALE — Supersonic jet fighter planes for intermediate-class export market. All-weather tactical combat aircraft with superior technology for air defense. Weapons capabilities: free-fall bombs; laser-guided bombs; air-to-air missiles; 20mm. and 30mm. guns. Speed: Up to 1200 mph. Competing U.S. suppliers: General Dynamics, Fort Worth, Tex.; Northrop Corp., Century City; Los Angeles. Potential world sales market: \$6 billion to \$10 billion.

By Murrey Marder

HIGH POLICY DECISIONS among nations are reflected most explicitly, although often distortedly, by tangible things: money, trade, political deals and, least ambiguously, by military hardware.

Almost the last thing that Secretary of State Alexander M. Haig Jr. is anxious to discuss in the Reagan administration's first plunge into triangular American-Chinese-Soviet strategy this weekend in Peking is the extremely prickly question of new American combat aircraft for Taiwan. This subject is loaded with volatile American political and commercial cross-interests, as well as the supreme sensitivities of Peking's political and military leadership.

What Haig wants to concentrate on are broad issues of geopolitical strategy. Nevertheless, Haig, it has been officially said, left for the Orient with "an open mind" on all U.S.-China issues. He is even prepared, it was added with deliberate imprecision, to engage in "a richer dialogue" with the People's Republic of China about possibly supplying it with American military equipment.

Just a few hours before Haig's plane took off Wednesday night, a very senior Defense Department official, speaking under press "background" rules, went further than the Carter administration did in such forums on the subject of arms for the PRC. The unidentifiable official said the Reagan administration is prepared to consider any requests which China may submit for American weapons — although no decision actually has been made to sell any to China, and no overall policy toward China yet exists.

Sophisticated readers of military-diplomatic pronouncements would recognize that as a multipurpose declaration.

The Reagan administration undoubtedly wanted to indicate to China again, as Haig departed for Peking, that it does not deserve Peking's continually aired suspicions that the Reagan White House might sacrifice America's China alignment to Reagan's preinaugural solicitude for the rival claimants to Chinese legitimacy on the island of Taiwan.

Furthermore, with Soviet pressure on Poland again growing, there presumably was another objective as well. The Reagan administration wants to underscore to the Kremlin, again, the consequences of using force to crush Poland's struggle for looser Communist rule. The last time around, Defense Secretary Caspar W. Weinberger publicly warned that if the Soviet Union invaded Poland, the United States might retaliate by opening its military arsenal to China. The administration's China specialists thought that was a *faux pas* of linkage that would be resented in Peking. The latest Pentagon reference to possible U.S. arms for China made no overt link to the Polish crisis, but the point will not be lost on

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